1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
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amity with his second; of a second wife who, after a quarrel with the first, poisoned herself with *derris* or 'New Guinea Dynamite'; and of a husband, formerly a village constable, who was so upset by the wrangling of his two wives as to go away and hang himself. But these instances once more are exceptional, and the polygamous household may be said as a rule to be a peaceful one. Very commonly each wife occupies a separate house, and invariably she works a garden area of her own, so that mutual independence does much to prevent friction.

To sum up on the social position of woman we may say that she is nominally and often actually under the control of her husband, but that by virtue of his restraint on the one hand and her powers of personal expression on the other, the married couple usually get on very well together as a working unit. In public life, i.e. in the affairs of clan and village, the woman takes only a small part, but is well contented to have it so. She works longer hours than her husband, but her share of labour is not entirely disproportionate; indeed, the popular belief that women do all the work in a native village while their men-folk sprawl about in idleness is quite mistaken. A fairly systematic investigation in two Aiga villages[1] showed that of a total potential working time, men were idle 50 per cent. and women 33 per cent. On the whole it may be safely said that the position of Orokaiva women—indeed of native women in general—is not so slave-like and degraded as popular sentiment imagines.

The Control of Children. Children become members of the father's clan and naturally assume his clan emblem. They thus belong essentially to the father rather than to the mother. In cases of divorce, for example, it is normal for the child to remain in the custody of the father, unless it be an infant at the breast, when the matter may be waived, though compensation is due to the husband. The case of orphans is similar. Although there appears to be no formal adoption they are cared for in the normal case by the people of their father, being regarded indeed as their property.

[1] *Interim Report on Native Labour*, 1927.

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764 152 their shoulders or beat themselves on the forehead with their clubs. Mourners will chew a poisonous root until their mouths and throats are severely corroded; and I know one man whose scarred buttocks afford irremovable evidence of the fact that he deliberately sat down in the fire at a 764 funeral. Even cases of suicide are not altogether uncom- 152 mon. A village constable not long ago poisoned himself with 'New Guinea Dynamite' after his wife's death; a 762 woman who saw both her brother and her son die within a short space of time went and hanged herself with a strip of bark-cloth; and a distracted widower of Wasida took a flying leap (though strangely not a fatal one) over a cliff of some thirty feet into a rocky river-bed. I dislike capping my own story with another man's, but cannot forbear to quote one of Mr. Flint's:

> 'An old man informs me that some time ago a woman held a tomahawk above her head and brought it down with such force that her skull was fractured. She died three days later from the effects of the injury. This woman had evidently been in the habit of hitting herself with a stone club and, to use my informant's words, "Did not savvy the white man's axe".'[1]

764 152 A woman once gave me an odd reason, but perhaps an understanding one, for these violent manifestations of grief. Grief itself is called *jo*, and this woman said that drastic measures such as the hacking of cheeks were meant to put a speedy end to the *jo*. Otherwise it would remain with the mourners for a long time.

764 After lying in state, so to speak, for perhaps a day and night, the body is wrapped in pandanus-leaf mats and bark-cloth for burial. The grave (*use*) is 3 or 4 feet deep. It contains an oblong 'coffin' (*detemba*), the floor of which is made of palm-wood strips like that of a house. The *detemba* is really no more than a strong framework of size sufficient to accommodate the body in a supine position. It is eventually covered with a roofing of poles and a large sheet of bark (*gapa*) to protect the corpse from the earth when it is thrown in.[2]

[1] *Annual Report*, 1924–5, p. 47.

[2] In the Sangara tribe (and possibly in others as well) the grave is undercut on one side at the bottom, the reason being once more to protect the body in its *detemba*

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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824 the ethics of angling. The roots of this plant (and in less
278 degree the leaves and stem) yield a white sap which has
strong poisonous properties, and which in many known
● [762] cases has been made a means of suicide. The suggestion,
however, that this might be added to the food of an
enemy has been laughed to scorn whenever I have made
it. The intended victim, I have been assured, would
immediately notice the taste and smell—slight but dis-
tinctive—of the plant, and would refuse to eat the food.[1]

754 The native evidence as to the vine *Anisi* has been some-
278 what conflicting. Some have classed it outright as *kai*,
824 i.e. they have included it among those evil specifics which
have been dealt with in section 5; others have said it is
not *kai* because its fatal or morbific properties are per-
fectly obvious and above board. I have one instance in
which *Anisi* was supposed to be added to the victim's
food. In this case the root was crushed up and first en-
[841] trusted to a woman during her menses, who was to sit on
it. Being contaminated with menstrual blood it was dried
and burnt to ashes in a fragment of pottery. The result-
ant powder was sprinkled like *aso*, i.e. ash salt, over the
food of the victim. My note does not record whether
the victim died, and I have no explanation of the part
which the menstrual blood was to perform. It remains
somewhat doubtful whether the *Anisi* was present in the
right form or quantity to be fatal. I have another in-
stance in which *Anisi* was used in sorcery, but this time
it was not introduced into the victim's stomach but
merely into the bamboo 'bottle', where maybe its
deadly qualities worked just as well. In fact one might
tell when *Anisi* had been used against a man in this way:
his dead eyes had a way of bulging out of his head like
those of a poisoned fish.

278 Another recognized poison is the cycad called *Puga*.
824 The fruit must be allowed to remain in running water for

[1] Derris root, i.e. of *Derris elliptica* Bentham (Leguminosae), is, however, said to 'kill fish in a dilution of 1 to 25,000 of water'. Vide Castellani and Chalmers, *Manual of Tropical Medicine*, p. 188.

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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a considerable time until its toxic properties are purged away, when it becomes a favourite food. I have never heard, however, of the young cycad fruit being used as a poison. The same is the case regarding the bark *Tangiri*, in which the presence of what I take to be Prussic acid is discernible by its smell. The only use of *Tangiri* within my knowledge is that of fumigating a man's head of hair. The bark is heated, and when it is emitting a cloud of pungent smoke is clamped upon the infested head of the patient.

Lastly, there is the *Pekamba*. This closely resembles the plant known in the Northern Division as *Punjaru*, remarkable for the gigantic flower which, when it passes maturity, breaks up in horrible and vile-smelling decomposition. It is not this decomposing substance, however, but the root of the related plant *Pekamba* (possibly also of *Punjaru* itself) which acts as a very strong corrosive poison. This again has been used in suicides, and further it provides one of the conventional means of self-castigation in time of great grief. A mourner on his way to a funeral will pluck up a *Pekamba* by the roots, and as he enters the wailing village will put his teeth into it and gnaw it until some less distracted or perhaps less theatrical mourner snatches it away. Should any be swallowed the result, I am assured, would be fatal. One old man of my acquaintance had chewed the *Pekamba* too freely in the forgetfulness of his grief and was in consequence ill and hardly able to eat for a period which he estimated at 'six weeks'.

There are no doubt other poisons of which I have no knowledge. But with those that have been mentioned it is possible that the plea advanced by the natives themselves regarding *Anisi* is equally applicable, i.e. they are not used because in fatal quantity they would be detected by the suspicious nostrils or palate of the victim. In fine, however, when we consider the countless variety of specifics which are supposed to possess deadly properties and which in known cases prove to be utterly